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TRANSITION PROTOCOLS

The transition into kindergarten is considered a milestone in the life of a child. How a child begins school can affect his/her future school career.

When children begin kindergarten, they arrive with a wide range of cognitive and social skills, life and cultural experiences, home environments and possible health issues. How children and their families are received into the school system can have a powerful, long lasting effect that can make the difference between future school success and failure.

Entry into kindergarten can be a dramatic shift for children in terms of academic demands, social environments, parent involvement, and class size, relative to what they may have experienced before attending kindergarten. Making sure all children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten, regardless of economic, cultural, developmental, and language background, is an important component.

Involving families and making them feel welcomed is crucial for a successful transition into kindergarten. Research indicates that children whose families are involved in their schools achieve at higher levels than children whose families are not involved.¹ They also have better school attendance, more positive attitude and behavior, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in higher education.²

Schools need to eliminate any potential barriers for parents to be involved. In addition, schools can expand their definition of parent involvement by recognizing the important contribution to a child's education at home by the family. Parents need to know that they are their child's first teacher and are critical in their child's success. Schools need to build personal relationships with those families who are hesitant to become involved. The keys to family involvement are to get to know individual families, make them feel welcome, and communicate regularly and effectively.

The National Education Goals Panel - Ready School initiative encourages schools to reach out to families before the child enters kindergarten with invitations from the school to make them feel welcome and part of the educational community and process. There are numerous ways to receive families and some suggestions are below, but each school should customize their programs to meet the unique needs of their population.

Once the child is in school, the *Ready School* continues reaching out and building relationships with the families. *Ready Schools* have an open door policy that strives to keep parents involved.

Our goal is to establish statewide transition protocols.

- Establish consistency and expectations for programs for students entering kindergarten
- Ensure differentiation, individualized instruction, and intervention from day one of Kindergarten entry
- Increase communication between early learning programs, schools, and families

¹ Fan, X., and Chen, M. (2001). Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13, 1-22.

² Henderson, A., and Berla, N. (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement*. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education